



Board Meeting

November 26, 2001

Eugene C. Chandler, *President*
Terry R. Troy, *Vice President*
David H. Galbreath
Thomas D. Hess
Robert S. Magee
Robert B. Thomas, Jr.
Karen L. Wolf
Samuel S. Fromille,
Student Representative
Jacqueline C. Haas, *Superintendent*
Secretary/Treasurer

OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

The regular business meeting of the Board of Education of Harford County was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Board President **Eugene C. Chandler** on November 26, 2001 in the gymnasium of Fallston Middle School. Board Member **Robert B. Thomas, Jr.** moved the agenda be amended. Board Member **David H Galbreath** made the motion to adopt the agenda and **Board Member Terry Troy** seconded the motion. A quorum call was made reflecting all Board members present, except Board Member **Karen L. Wolf**, who was absent due to illness. Mr. Thomas led those present in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

RECOGNITION

HCPS EDUCATOR HALL OF FAME – PAUL J. TRACY/RUTH H. BURKINS

The two retired educators being added to the Harford County Educators Hall of Fame were introduced to those present by Student Representative to the Board **Samuel S. Fromille IV**. **Paul J. Tracy**, 34-year educator with the Harford County Public Schools, was a social studies teacher, vice principal, and high school supervisor/supervisor of social studies. Mr. Tracy was credited with establishing the system's student rights and responsibilities policies, alternative education, paid department chairs and many other innovations. His

humor and supportive style made him a favorite with teachers. He was also a consistent speaker at school system events. The 64-year-old Perryman resident began with the school system in 1958 and retired in 1992. **Ruth H. Burkins** is a native of Harford County who taught Core and other subjects at Bel Air and North Harford high schools before being named a secondary school general supervisor. Later, she was named supervisor of special education. Dr. Burkins is credited with having begun the school system's gifted and talented program and was instrumental in the development of summer school for secondary students and helped develop teacher in-service programs. She was also a mentor of Superintendent **Jacqueline C. Haas**. Mrs. Haas and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler presented Mr. Tracy and Dr. Burkins with plaques, certificates, and a laminated copy of the article about their careers which appeared in the November edition of *Harford Schools*.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stuart Chapman, science teacher at Harford Technical High School, substituting for **Paul Schatz**, president of the Harford County Education Association, presented a brief report to the Board, thanking them for their support and asking that the Board consider HCEA's proposed calendar for 2002-03 along with that of the principals/supervisors.

Deb Merlock of Abingdon, vice president of legislation for the Harford County Council of PTA's, presented that organizations stance on several issues. She said HCCPTA supports the State Board of Education's point of view on class size reduction. She called for a change in the County's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance and State construction guidelines. Mrs. Merlock said HCCPTA supports a balancing enrollment concept that could include open enrollments, magnets with transportation and a reduction of the APFO trigger from its current 120 percent to 105 percent. She said that the safety and welfare of students and staff has to be the highest priority and urged the Board to consider a countywide dress code, two-way communications, and entrance control, seeking grants to pay for the improvements. Mrs. Merlock said the Maryland PTA's number one priority is the support of funding to implement recommendations of the Thornton Commission.

Vicki Manning of Bel Air urged the Board to adopt a dress code for students requiring that shirts be tucked in. She said the sign in tables are good ideas in schools, but a photo ID should be required. She added that two-way communications from classrooms to the school office is essential.

Pat Hogan of Bel Air complained about the lack of a two-way communication system for Bel Air Middle School. She said there is a need for a telephone in each classroom.

Cindy Mumby of Bel Air, who has children at Ring Factory Elementary and Bel Air Middle School, said the current timetable to have two-way communications in the classrooms had been established before the events of September 11th. She said such communication is "not a luxury but a necessity." She said the current performance review being conducted on the system, if it can identify efficiencies, should have money saved devoted to providing two-way communications. She also suggested that the County government be approached about contributing some of its \$14.2 million surplus to two-way

communications for classrooms.

Mary Almasy of Bel Air added her call for two-way classroom communications. She also supported photo ID badges for students and a student dress code geared toward safety.

CLOSED BOARD SESSIONS

Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler said there had been some concern expressed in the public involving guidelines for open, closed, or executive function. Board attorney **Patrick Spicer** provided information on the origin of the State Open Meeting Act, which was passed in 1977 by the General Assembly and extended in 1991. He said the purpose was to facilitate the need for more public meetings while maintaining the balance of allowing public bodies to do business and maintain confidentiality where necessary. Mr. Spicer said anytime a quorum of a public body such as the County Council, county commissions, town councils, Board of Education, etc. is together for the purpose of doing public business, the meetings have to be open to the public unless the business being conducted is listed as those specifically excluded from the Open Meetings Act. He said a closed session could be conducted (not open to the public) when one of the 14 exceptions listed by the Open Meetings Act is to be discussed. Mr. Spicer said the date, time and place of the meeting must be published in advance and that the body must meet in public and vote to close the meeting, stating the topic to be discussed. He said minutes of the meeting must be published and should be complete without divulging any information identified as confidential under the Open Meetings Act. He said the third type of meeting – Executive Session – can be conducted without public notification so long as the business being conducted concerns how the public body can execute an already existing responsibility. He said the evaluation of the superintendent or procedures regulating public comment by the Board is permitted under the Executive Session. Mr. Spicer said executive sessions are the most troublesome for the public to understand and should be used sparingly.

Mr. Thomas said in the spring of 1999, Mr. Spicer and representatives from the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), and three or four members of the Maryland General Assembly conducted a session on the Open Meetings Act. Mr. Thomas said that the message coming out of the current controversy is that the Board of Education of Harford County followed the Open Meetings Act requirements correctly. He said that Mr. Spicer will review all future closed session agendas to ensure items to be considered are appropriate.

Mark Wolkow of Abingdon reminded Board members of the upcoming Harford County Permanent Nominating Caucus as it relates to Board of Education and Harford Community College Board of Trustees positions. He said that **David H. Galbreath's** position, representing the northern Harford area, will be open (Mr. Galbreath is completing his first full five year term and is eligible for reappointment). In addition, he said that the Edgewood/Abingdon position currently filled by **Thomas D. Hess** will be open. Mr. Hess is completing his second five year-term and will not be eligible for reappointment. In addition, Mr. Wolkow said, the Harford Community College post currently held by **Bernard Barnes**, which is a countywide position, will be open. Dr. Barnes is eligible for a

second five year term. Mr. Wolkow said the deadline for candidates to submit their names for consideration is February 21, 2002. The same date is the deadline for non-profit organizations to sign up to take part in the process. He said the candidates forum will be held on April 4, 2002 at Southampton Middle School, from 6:30 until 10:00 p.m. The voting convention will be held on May 23, 2002 at Southampton, starting at 6:45 p.m. The names of those receiving the top votes of the Caucus membership will be submitted to the Governor.

OLD BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

CONSENT AGENDA

Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Mr. Magee and Mr. Hess, the Board voted unanimously to approve items on the Consent Agenda, including: Minutes from the October 29, 2001 work session and the November 12, 2001 business meeting; award of contract for employee life insurance; approval of resolution equipment lease and escrow agreement with Sun Trust Bank in reference to financing the performance energy contract; transfer of bus contracts; and the monthly report on personnel.

WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICE POLICY

Reporting on the proposed Wireless Communication Devices policy, Assistant Superintendent for Education Services, Dr. Barnes, told the Board that a change in the state law last year has removed the criminal penalties for students to possess pagers and cell phones on school property. He said the recommended policy retains the prohibition of Harford County's Board policy on pagers while allowing high school students to bring cell phones to school. However, the cell phones need to be stored in lockers or in student vehicles and cannot be activated during the regular school day. Dr. Barnes said the middle school principals had unanimously rejected a proposal that the possession of cell phones be expanded to students in that group. Dr. Barnes said the policy will need to be reviewed annually as advances are made in communication technology. He said personal data assistants (PDA's) and laptop computers which have communications capabilities will be regulated by schools and allowed as they are used for educational purposes. Mr. Fromille said that other counties have had problems with students abusing their cell phone privileges but said he is confident Harford students will respect their use. He added that he is in favor of extending the cell phone privileges to middle school students. Board Member **Thomas D. Hess** said, had a poll been taken among school leaders, it would have resulted in no change in the prohibition for cell phone use. He said the compromise represents a "half loaf" for students and that the Board will review the policy next year. Board Vice President **Terry R. Troy** said the president of the Washington County Board of Education said his county is having great difficulties with students abusing the cell phone privilege. Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Mr. Hess, the Board voted unanimously to approve the proposed policy. Implementation of the new policy will be delayed until the

start of the second semester (January 28, 2002) to allow for administrative procedures to be developed and for information to be communicated to students and parents.

PRESENTATIONS

VISION STATEMENT

Board Member **Robert S. Magee** told the Board that he and Mrs. Troy had worked with a group to propose a new vision statement for the school system. He said the current vision statement, which was implemented in 1998, has served the system well, but it is time to update the statement. He said the vision statement states the essential direction of the system, and should “roll of the tongue easily.” He said that the proposed statement, finalized by a committee of students, staff, and the community, harkens back to the late Board member **George D. Lisby**, with his “Educating Everyone Takes Everyone,” motto. Mr. Magee introduced Mr. Fromille, who had been part of the committee, who presented a Powerpoint slide show on the proposal. The complete proposed vision statement is posted on the Harford County Public School web site. Mr. Magee said the Board would lay consideration of the proposed vision statement over for 60 days (until January 28, 2002) and would seek public input on the proposal. He said a mission statement and goals would be proposed following approval of the vision statement.

TEST ADMINISTRATION AND DATA REPORTING POLICY

Carolyn Wood, supervisor of testing, research and evaluation, presented the Board with a first reading of a proposed policy on Test Administration and Data Reporting. She said the state accountability program began in the late 1970s with reading, language usage and math tests, followed by citizenship in the early 1980s. She said, in the late 1980's, the Sondheim Commission wrote the report that resulted in the more rigorous Maryland School Performance Assessment Program tests. Dr. Wood said the policy would be laid over for 30 days for input and the Board is scheduled to take action on the proposal at its December 17, 2001 meeting.

HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Cathy Price, supervisor of equity and cultural diversity, presented the proposed revised Board policy on Harassment and Discrimination. Mrs. Price said, on October 29, 1999, the Maryland State Board of Education passed an amendment to the Education That is Multicultural Bylaw concerning harassment and discrimination against students. MSDE established the expectation that all school districts develop strategies to implement the harassment amendment. Harford County Public Schools plan was submitted to MSDE in January 2001. The plan calls for a review of existing harassment policies to assure their compliance with the harassment bylaw amendment. The HCPS Policy Review Committee has revised the statement on harassment and discrimination. Mrs. Price said the law is now in effect prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation for housing or employment. She said, in January, the State Board will include sexual orientation in Maryland COMAR. She said, when that occurs, the policy will come back to the Board for consideration of

inclusion. The proposal was tabled for 30 days or until the State Board takes action. Mr. Thomas said the State Board action, through COMAR, has the strength of law.

ANNUAL REPORT POLICY

Director of Public Information **Donald Morrison** presented the Board with the proposed reaffirmation of its policy on an annual report. Mr. Morrison said the proposal before the Board reflects an adjustment in the legal citation, but, otherwise, is the same as the one which has existed since 1980, with a 1996 amendment. The proposed policy will be held over 30 days for action by the Board.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Mrs. Haas and the school system's Legislative and Government Relations liaison **Kathy Carmello** presented the Board with several pieces of proposed legislation, including one on a proposed income tax credit for contributions to school tuition organizations. Mrs. Carmello said the tax credit would be equal to the amount of the tuition. She said it would have the same unwanted effect as vouchers. Mr. Thomas said he would prefer the Board not take a position on the bill until it is filed and the Board is able to see the language involved. Mr. Magee said it doesn't matter when the Board takes official action, he is on record as opposing the concept of providing tax credits for tuition paid. Mr. Magee said the legislation leaves out those who don't make enough to send their children to private school, and would widen the achievement gap. Mr. Galbreath said an Arizona law allows people to give money to the public schools and receive a tax credit, adding that, if the legislation were to be worded in that manner, it could provide the mechanism to encourage contributions to the public schools in exchange for tax credits. Mr. Thomas said he ran for his Board seat seven years ago with a plank opposed to vouchers and "no matter how you slice it, this is a voucher."

OPPORTUNITY FOR BOARD MEMBERS TO PRESENT NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Thomas told the Board that Joppatowne High School had taken part in the Maryland Public Secondary School Athletic Association (MPSSAA) Class 2A state final football game the previous Friday night at the University of Maryland's College Park Byrd Stadium. Though the Mariners lost to Hereford High School, Mr. Thomas said the team had brought honor to the county through its undefeated regular season and two playoff wins.

Mr. Hess and Mr. Magee noted that schools in other parts of the county had come together to support Joppatowne's run to the state championship finals, typical of the way schools support one another. Mr. Magee said the effort demonstrated "the quality of young people we have."

FUTURE MEETINGS

Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler reviewed the upcoming meetings of the Board of Education, including a December 3, 2001 work session at the HEAT Center on enrollments and capacities; the next regular business meeting to be held December 10, 2001 at Fallston Middle School (7:00 p.m.) and the last regular business meeting of the calendar year, December 17, 2001 (Fallston Middle School, 6:30 p.m.). Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler also reminded the public about a work session to be held at the HEAT Center on Monday, January 7, 2002, beginning at 7:00 p.m. during which the MGT performance audit will be discussed with the consultant.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Mrs. Troy, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

MORE INFORMATION

The school system is attempting to prevent duplications and reduce production/mailing costs of the printed versions of B-Line. Those who are able to access B-Line on line and who would like their copy of the printed version of the document discontinued should e-mail the Director of Public Information: drmorrison.gs@hcps.k12.md.us; Or call the HCPS Customer Relations Action Line (24-hours-a-day) at 410-638-0022.

For more information on Board meetings or other matters affecting the Harford County Public Schools, contact the system's Director of Public Information, 410-588-5203; or call the HCPS Customer Relations Action Line (24-hours-a-day) at 410-638-0022.

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